

Sen. John K.

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Fulbright Threatens to Block Action on U.S.I.A.

Budget Over Agency's Refusal to Supply Planning Data

By JOHN W. FINNEY
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WASHINGTON, March 20—

Senator J. W. Fulbright threatened today to block congressional action on the United States Information Agency's budget unless the agency reversed its refusal to supply a planning document to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

At the same time, Senator Fulbright, the committee chairman charged that the agency was directly opposing and undermining President Nixon's

policy of negotiation, not confrontation, with Communist nations.

The Fulbright threat came as Frank Shakespeare, the agency's director, appeared before the committee in support of legislation to authorize a \$200-million budget for the agency in the fiscal year beginning July 1.

During the hearing, Senator Fulbright, Democrat of Arkansas, disclosed that the agency, in response to a committee staff request in early February, had refused to supply the committee with various country-

program memoranda and planning papers that are used in drafting the agency's budget. Joining the chairman in criticizing the agency for this refusal was Senator Clifford P. Case, Republican of New Jersey, who observed that the committee could not pass on the agency's budget request unless it had access to basic information about the program.

An 'Executive Decision'

Mr. Shakespeare, defending what he described as "an executive decision," argued that the documents were "unevaluated"

working papers from officers in various countries and they did not represent official agency policy. If they were made available to Congress, he argued, "It would stifle everybody" and "all you would get from the field would be mush."

In a letter last Thursday to Senator Fulbright, Mr. Shakespeare argued that withholding the documents was in line with an executive order on secrecy issued by President Nixon the day before. In the order, the stated purpose of which was to reduce Government classification of documents, Mr. Nixon

held that "internal working papers" on foreign policy could be withheld from Congress on the ground of executive privilege.

New Legislative Authority

Senator Fulbright said that he found it "difficult to reconcile" the information agency's secrecy with a statement in a Presidential message accompanying the executive order, saying that "when information which properly belongs to the people is systematically withheld by those in power, the people soon become ignorant of

their own affairs, distrustful of those who manage them and eventually incapable of determining their own destinies."

This year, the Foreign Relations Committee has new authority to compel the State Department and the United States Information Agency to provide information, under an amendment to this year's foreign aid act. The State Department and the agency must get authorization for their budgets from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

Senator Fulbright made it

clear that he was prepared to invoke that authority.

In support of his contention

that the agency is following

the cold-war line that envisions

"monolithic, conspiratorial communism," Senator Fulbright cited a policy memorandum issued by Mr. Shakespeare last June 21. It told his agency offices to make a "major effort" to mark the 10th anniversary of the Berlin Wall by emphasizing that "Communist societies inevitably turn into prisons."

The Senator also noted that

Colombia states that a major objective of its program there should be to "alert Colombians to the dangers of Communist

solutions of national problems."